



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

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POWERS, DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The 1973 Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu ("RCH") authorized the council to establish the office of council services (OCS) to assist it in the exercise of its legislative power (Sec. 3-107.7 RCH). The 1971-72 Charter Commission cited this as one of the most important changes affecting the legislative branch of city government. In this regard, OCS was viewed as "a necessary adjunct to and is supportive of the policy formulation or legislative role of the city council" and "a tool for decision making – to assist it in analyzing the city's policies and financial programs for their effectiveness and adequacy and in identifying alternative programs and policies and major problems which endanger the public interest and welfare."

OCS was created on March 19, 1973 by enactment of Ordinance 4116 (Article 3, Chapter 4, ROH). It is charged with providing comprehensive research and reference services for the council, conducting research for the enactment or consideration of legislation, and serving in an advisory or consultative capacity to the council and its committees.

SERVICES PERFORMED

With a staff of 18 – a director, an assistant director, five attorneys, six analysts, one paralegal, and four support staff – OCS services performed the following services:

- Conducted independent research necessary for the enactment of legislation upon the request of the council;
- Provided assistance to the council's standing committees by conducting background research, gathering pertinent data, and serving as resource persons to the committees;
- Analyzed executive branch proposals, programs, bills, and reports at the request of the council;
- Provided legal research and advice at the request of the council;
- Prepared bills and resolutions requested by councilmembers;
- Analyzed, prepared amendments for, and monitored the execution of the city's operating and capital budgets;
- Provided information to individual councilmembers by letter, memorandum, personal or telephone conferences, or electronic communication;
- Provided liaison service to the council regarding the city's information technology systems, including geographic information system (GIS);
- Served as revisor of ordinances and supervised the revision, codification, and printing of the revised ordinances of Honolulu and maintained the city's computerized databases for the revised ordinances and city policy resolutions;
- Assisted the council in fulfilling its responsibilities as a member of the Hawaii State Association of Counties;
- Assisted the councilmembers when they functioned as trustees of Kapiolani Park; and
- Maintained on-line communication with other municipalities through "CouncilLink" as a means of sharing information relevant to cities and counties across the United States.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES FOR FY 2010

Research Activities

As the research arm of the council, OCS prepared approximately 753 written responses to requests for service in fiscal year 2009-10. These responses included 189 bills, 396 resolutions, and 168 letters, legal memoranda, and statistical and research reports. OCS also provided research and staff assistance to the council's standing committees and legal staff services for the executive sessions of the committee on executive matters and legal affairs. In these executive sessions, councilmembers considered matters permitted by chapter 92, HRS, to be discussed in meetings closed to the public and discussed claims against the city where the premature disclosure of information would adversely affect the interests of the city and the public.

OCS issued another of its "Issue Profile, Status of the City's Finances" reports in March 2010. Published annually since 2002, the report provides an overview of certain fiscal trends of the city, reviews the prior year's revenues and expenditures for the operating budget, checks on the mid-year status of the current year's major revenue assumptions and major operating budget expenditures, and reports on the status of the prior year's capital budget appropriations. The report is intended to provide the council with a historical and comparative context to review the upcoming city budget.

For more than a decade, OCS has provided the only volunteer reviewers in the state of Hawaii for the nationwide Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) distinguished budget presentation awards program. The reviews are based on how well an applicant local government's annual budget documents meet GFOA criteria relating to the budget as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communications device. During fiscal year 2009-10, one analyst served as a GFOA budget reviewer. The budget reviewed in the fiscal year included those of the following jurisdictions and entities:

San Francisco, California
Boston, Massachusetts
New Jersey
North Dakota